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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002872

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AF FOR A/S FRAZER AND DAS YAMAMOTO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [UNSC](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: MELES HOPES TO DELAY SOMALIA  
INTERVENTION UNTIL MID-NOVEMBER

Classified By: CHARGE VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: PM Meles told visiting Gen. Fulford and SFRC staffer Michael Phelan that delays and problems with IGASOM deployment might leave Ethiopia to face the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) alone, but that he hoped to hold off on military intervention until around mid-November. He said the delay should allow the UNSC to consider a partial lifting of the UN arms embargo as well as improve weather conditions for military operations in Somalia. The PM indicated that Ugandan troops might no longer be available for deployment in IGASOM due to pressure to desist from "a prominent member of the Commonwealth." Meles alleged that funding for the CIC was coming from salafist Muslims in the Gulf as well as Sufists from Egypt and Sudan. Eritrea was using these funds to supply Russian-made, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft and anti-tank weaponry. Meles said the GOE's goal in a military operation would be to force the disintegration of CIC forces, whom he predicted would collapse back into sub-clan level militias pursuing their own interests. Low-level CIC representatives had told GOE reps that they would leave Ethiopia in peace if the GOE agreed not to impede the creation of a unified, CIC-run state in Somalia, but PM said the GOE had rejected the offer. The goal of Ethiopian military action would be to push back the CIC, deliver territory and time back to the TFG and train the TFG to defend itself. End Summary

¶2. (C) A USG delegation including Ret. Gen Carl Fulford and Amb. Peter Chaveas from the African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), Gen. Remkis from EUCOM J5 and Michael Phelan, a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer, called on Prime Minister Meles Oct. 26. Charge and Pol/Econ Counselor accompanied the group. The ACSS delegation was visiting Addis to inaugurate a new ACSS annex, the first in Africa, on the compound of U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa. Phelan is conducting a multi-nation visit in East Africa. The Prime Minister welcomed the establishment of the ACSS in Addis. Most discussion focused on Somalia; a separate message will report on discussion of the report of Independent Commission of Inquiry into domestic political violence in 2005.

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CIC A POWERFUL MONSTER WITH FEET OF CLAY  
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¶3. (C) Phelan asked for the PM's view on the situation in Somalia. Meles called Somalia the most important challenge

to Ethiopia's security. He said the CIC had capitalized on chaos in Somalia by providing social services, security and stability that people wanted. They had used this achievement as an entry point for imposing their radical Islamic agenda on a country whose Muslims had always practiced tolerance. The PM said that the Somali sub-clan militias fighting under the CIC were not a real threat, but their foreign-financed Jihadist leadership was. He called the CIC in general "a powerful monster emerging, but with feet of clay." The CIC had momentum and funding now which were keeping its disparate, clan-based elements together. Their agenda was to exploit this momentum to remove the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) as well as provisional governments in Somaliland and Puntland. "Once they control all of Somalia, they have lots of ideas about a broader Caliphate," he added. He also referred to "international brigades" of extremist volunteers from Indonesia, Pakistan and elsewhere to provide training, including in suicide bomb attacks.

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Eritrean Arms Bought with Foreign Funds  
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14. (C) The PM said that the normally anti-Islamic Eritrean Government was pursuing a short-sighted policy of aiding jihadists, apparently in the hopes that the extremists "would attack Ethiopia before they attack us." Meles claimed that the Eritreans had provided the CIC with Russian-made, shoulder-fired anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry. The funding, he said, had come from both salafist individuals and charities in Gulf States as well as Sufist elements in Egypt and Sudan. He noted that the GOE had observed some tension between the two groups in training camps in Somali, but that their unusual cooperation was continuing. When Gen. Fulford

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asked if the conflict in Somalia were not simply a proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Meles replied that the two issues were separate. There was a genuine threat from Islamists in the region that would exist with or without Eritrean help; Eritrea was simply trying to take advantage of it.

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CIC Not Interested In Talks, Sharing Power  
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15. (C) Meles told the group that the CIC had demonstrated through its handling of Khartoum talks with the TFG that it was not going to accept a negotiated solution, nor did it see the necessity of sharing power with the TFG. The CIC had continued its territorial expansion in spite of two cease-fires signed in Khartoum. The PM also revealed that low level reps from the GOE and CIC had held discussions recently in Nairobi. In that exchange, the CIC had indicated that the GOE was the only obstacle standing between it and achieving its goal of a united Somalia. If the GOE were willing to stand back and allow the CIC to consolidate control in Somalia, the CIC promised to leave Ethiopia in peace. According to the PM, GOE reps responded that although Ethiopia had not yet acted militarily, it would never accept the CIC's agenda and would intervene to stop it if others did not. The GOE had urged the CIC to work out a power-sharing arrangement with the TFG, but the reps had also declined. "At least there was clarity on both sides," Meles concluded. He added that if the CIC were stopped militarily, clan militias would resume their traditional loyalties and healthier elements of the CIC could be incorporated into the TFG. Jihadists could not be eliminated altogether, Meles predicted, but they could be marginalized.

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Uganda Sidelined, Ethiopia Prepared to Act Alone  
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16. (C) The Prime Minister said that he had recently received

private communications from the Ugandan Government informing him that due to "pressure from a prominent member of the Commonwealth," (note: probably the UK) Uganda would not be able to deploy in Somalia within an acceptable time frame. The Ugandan government had said that it had received signals that to deploy would be "inconsistent" with serving as host of the upcoming Commonwealth Summit. Meles bemoaned the loss of the "international cover" that Uganda would have provided for efforts to stop the CIC, but said that Ethiopia was prepared to handle the task directly alone if necessary. He also noted that the costs of the operation would increase over time.

17. (C) The PM said that the GOE planned to wait until the UN Security Council's planned consideration of a resolution to partially lift the arms embargo in early November before launching any military operation against the CIC. Weather conditions in Somalia would also improve in mid-November, he added, making ground-based military action easier. He caveated his remarks, however, but noting that the CIC might act preemptively to catch the GOE before it was fully ready. Such an action might force the GOE's hand, but Ethiopia might still "take some punches" until the rainy season ended.

18. (C) The objective of Ethiopian operations would be to push the CIC back to Mogadishu, "liberate" parts of Somalia for a TFG takeover and train the TFG to defend itself, Meles explained. He said that Ethiopia could not fight the Islamists itself forever, but was confident that the TFG could be trained to handle the job itself. The PM pointed to Ethiopia's previous experience with TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf in Puntland, where Yusuf had taken help from Ethiopia but had eventually built a self-sufficient militia able to cope with extremists.

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USG Understands GOE Position Best  
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19. (C) Gen. Fulford asked whether IGAD countries and the African Union (AU) would support military action to defend the TFG. Meles replied that he was confident of support from

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Kenya and Uganda. In fact, President Museveni wanted Ethiopia to move more quickly. The AU, meanwhile, "should at least not pose a problem." Meles said that the GOE had discussed the issue with leaders in the AU Commission and believed there was an understanding on this point. He told Fulford that Eritrea was of course on the side of the CIC, and that Djibouti was taking a position somewhat closer to the CIC as well. Sudan might not support an Ethiopian military operation, but was unlikely to do anything against it. Beyond the region, Meles said that the USG understood Ethiopia's position the best, while the UK had recently shown signs of ambivalence about Somalia. The PM said the GOE would try to "firm them up." He expected that the EU might issue negative statements about an military operation, but suggested that he would be prepared to live with that.

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